



Curbing Aggressive Driving

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Last month, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released early estimates of traffic fatalities for 2023 so far, estimating traffic fatalities declined for the fifth straight quarter. An estimated 19,515 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes—a decrease of about 3.3% compared to fatalities in the first half of 2022. Fatalities declined in both the first and second quarters of 2023.

Continuing the trend identified in the first quarter estimates, preliminary data shows vehicle miles traveled in the first half of 2023 increased by about 35.1 billion miles, roughly 2.3% higher than the same time last year. More miles driven combined with fewer traffic deaths resulted in a fatality rate of 1.24 fatalities per 100 million VMT, down from the projected VMT in the first half of 2023.

As a professional truck driver, what can you do to keep this trend moving in the right direction? One way is to avoid aggressive driving. What is aggressive driving? Any unsafe driving behavior performed deliberately and with ill intention or disregard for safety can constitute aggressive driving. Examples of aggressive driving behaviors include:

- Speeding in heavy traffic
- Cutting in front of another driver and then slowing down
- Changing lanes without signaling
- Weaving in and out of traffic
- Blocking cars attempting to pass or change lanes
- Tailgating
- Running red lights
- Using headlights or brakes to “punish” other drivers

Engaging in these hazardous driving behaviors may constitute a criminal offense of reckless driving. It may escalate into road rage and often results in crashes involving loss of life and serious injuries. The American Transportation Research Institute reports the likelihood of a commercial motor vehicle being involved in a crash increases significantly when the driver has been convicted of one of these hazardous actions.

For example, a driver with a reckless driving violation has a 114% greater likelihood of being involved in a crash. The likelihood of a crash increases by 46% if the driver has a violation for following too closely. Additionally, a driver is 45% more likely to get into a crash if they have a speeding violation.

Here are some steps to avoid aggressive driving:

- Keep in mind that driving is not a competition. Leave your ego at home. If another driver is acting aggressively, don't take the challenge. Just back off and live to drive another day.
- Allow ample time to get to your destination safely.
- Obey all posted speed limits and slow down if conditions warrant a slower speed.
- Don't tailgate. Following too closely reduces a driver's visibility and reaction time.
- Never attempt to pass a vehicle unless it is safe and there is plenty of time to do so safely.
- Never make obscene gestures or use your horn out of anger.
- Don't provoke or allow yourself to be provoked. If another driver is acting aggressively, ignore them.
- Remember the three Bs: be courteous, be patient, be forgiving.
- Finally, buckle up. It is your last line of defense. Seat belts save lives.